

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, Members of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) questioned British Petroleum and other responsible parties regarding language access and outreach to communities with limited English proficiency affected by the oil spill in the Gulf Coast. Southeast Asian fisherman, including the Vietnamese American community, comprise one third of the 13,000 fishing vessels registered in the Gulf Coast. The oil spill and its effects on the seafood industry will negatively impact 80% of Vietnamese and Southeast Asian families.

“Vietnamese fishermen face serious language and cultural barriers when it comes to accessing services and compensation,” said Rep. Michael Honda (CA-15), chair of CAPAC. “These communities, still rebuilding from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, face tremendous debt and financial difficulty now that their livelihoods have been taken away from the oil spill. Unable to pay their bills, families are losing their homes and their boats. BP must take responsibility and ensure that this community is not overlooked.”

“At a time of emergency, it is important for us to help make sure that all families are able to access help and resources that will help them restore their lives,” said Rep. John Conyers (MI-14), chairman of the House Judiciary Committee. “As a proud associate member of CAPAC, I expect BP and other responsible parties to adequately provide language access and outreach to these communities.”

“Sadly, fishermen across the Gulf Coast have lost their livelihood due to the failures of BP, Transocean, Halliburton, and the other companies responsible for this national disaster,” said Rep. Judy Chu (CA-32), chair of CAPAC’s Economic Development Task Force, and member of the House Judiciary Committee. “But the unique problems facing the large population of Vietnamese fishermen are being ignored. BP has failed to reach out to this community and educate them about how to recoup damages and file claims. That is why we must continue to hold BP accountable for repairing the economic damage facing all fishermen and ensure they have access to the benefits they deserve, regardless of race or English proficiency.”

“Thousands of Vietnamese-American and other non-English speaking fishermen and workers

along the Gulf Coast are out of work because of the spill,” said Rep. Anh “Joseph” Cao (LA-02), a member of CAPAC’s Executive Board. “Because of the language barrier, many do not understand the processes for filing claims for lost wages, property damages or personal injury with BP or applications for assistance from the government, and some cannot produce income tax returns as proof of wages. It’s imperative that BP and the government provide assurance these victims will not slip through the cracks. They must have translators to help them navigate the red tape and some kind of system in place to help them get the help they need.”

Click here to view a clip of the committee hearing or visit: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kU\\_FwdVBfAI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kU_FwdVBfAI). Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) is comprised of Members of Congress who are committed to promoting the well-being of the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. CAPAC is bipartisan and bicameral and currently has 30 members. It was founded in 1994 by then Congressman Norman Mineta, and is currently chaired by Congressman Michael Honda.

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*The Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) is a bicameral and bipartisan caucus of Members of Congress of Asian and Pacific Islander descent and Members who have a strong dedication to promoting the well-being of the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. Founded in 1994 by then Congressman Norman Mineta, and currently chaired by Congressman Michael Honda, CAPAC has been addressing the needs of the AAPI community in all areas of American life. For more information on CAPAC, please call (202) 225-2631 or visit <http://www.honda.house.gov/capac>.*